

Why You Need to Build Spirit-Filled Silence Into Your Life

Why is quiet such a rare thing in our world?

Consider that:

–When we get into our cars, one of the first things we do is turn on music.

–When we come home to an empty house, how often is the television turned on for “background noise”?

–If a group of people are silent for more than a few seconds, someone invariably feels the need to say *something*, even if it’s just to make small talk.

–The word “crickets” has come to mean silence, the kind of silence heard on a country evening when, apart from the chirping of crickets, there are no other sounds.

–Speakers searching for a particular word often fill the gap with a drawn-out “um” rather than allow silence to hang in the air until the word occurs to them.

Why does silence make us uncomfortable?

The fear of silence actually has a name: “sedatephobia,” a diagnosis that has become prevalent in the past 50 years or so.

The rapid development of technology has added to this problem. Many people experience symptoms akin to withdrawal if they are separated from the external stimulation of their devices for even short periods of time.

Even among Christians, the concept of having a “quiet time” (reading the Bible and praying) is something we have to be

intentional about or it just doesn't happen.

Becoming comfortable with silence has been an adjustment for me this past year. Living with someone for four decades usually meant having a person home to talk to or to listen to. Either way, a silent house was not the norm.

But the consequences of discomfort with silence reach beyond physical or psychological implications. In filling the silence, we're drowning out the voice of God in our lives.

How many of us have said, "I wish I could hear God speak to me"? The truth is, He *is* speaking to us through the Bible. Still, His Holy Spirit also speaks to our spirit, prompting us with conviction, comfort, thoughts and ideas to provide guidance and direction. Of course, the Holy Spirit will never direct us contrary to His written Word.

But if we're dependent on a wall of sound to dull our senses, why are we surprised that we cannot hear God speak to us? Remember the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings:

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind split the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake came, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire came, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire, a still, small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood in the entrance to the cave (1 Kings 19:11b-13a).

Could it be our dependence on background noise has caused us to become obsessed with seeking God's dramatic moves because He is now competing with all the other sounds and stimulation in our world? Are we convinced that if God is speaking, it must sound like a strong wind, an earthquake or a roaring fire, and if it doesn't, then it must not be God?

Instead of filling the silence, what would happen if we intentionally built periods of silence into our day? Not nap times, but rather, quiet times without external stimulation. Such times are when it will become easier for us to hear and recognize God's "still, small voice," or as other translations phrase it, "low whisper" (ESV)" or "gentle blowing" (NASB).

Even better, what would happen if we were to train our children to have a quiet time in their day? A time when they sit still and think about what God has done for them. The children's program in Bible Study Fellowship International (BSF) actually incorporates such a quiet time as preschoolers are taught a Bible lesson, then spend a few minutes simply lying down and thinking about what they've learned.

If we encouraged this practice in our homes, perhaps when they grow to adulthood, children wouldn't be uncomfortable with silence. Instead, those "crickets" might help them recognize God's gentle whisper guiding them through life.

What do you think? Are you filling the silence or are there quiet times in your daily routine? Is it time to begin building those quiet spaces today? {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .